

THE 5FT FIREFIGHTER

Becoming a Wildland Firefighter

Wildland firefighting is inherently dangerous work. However, the rewards outweigh the risk in my experience.

Here's answers to the most commonly asked questions I get as a mentor for you to get an idea of my day-to-day life as a Wildland fire fighter and what you're getting yourself into.

It can be daunting. I know.

When I first applied to wildland fire jobs in 2012, I had no idea what I was doing. I even had help. A close friend and my boyfriend at the time were both hotshots and helped me through the USAJobs online application process. I remember it not being very intuitive and having no clue what to write on my resume or what all the jargon meant.

I literally applied to every single entry-level position I could find. It didn't matter which town or part of the country it was in. I thought there was probably no way in hell I would be hired as a rookie firefighter with zero fire experience.

I didn't even have the basic wildland fire classes. All I knew was that I was intrigued by the job, as seen through my friend's eyes, and I wanted to go for it, no matter the odds.



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*Out of
probably 50
applications I*

*submitted, I got two interest calls. One
promptly wrote me off and the other hired me. I
had no idea how lucky I was.*

*Even after seven years as a wildland
firefighter, that summer was the busiest fire
season I've ever had. In four and a half months
our fuels/Type-2 IA crew racked up around 800
hours of overtime, including 46 straight paid
days.*

I was only home to sleep, shower, do laundry and calorie binge. There wasn't time for anything else, but I loved it. I loved the work and I loved my crew.

It was one of the best summers of my life. I saw so much fire and I was getting stronger every day. I knew I had found a job I wanted to keep doing season after season.



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One day I shyly asked my captain why he had hired me with no experience. He said that I had written about a two-week backpacking trip I had done and that I enjoyed long distance running.

He figured that he could teach me about fire as long as I enjoyed being outside and pushing myself physically.

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